

EMPIRICAL STUDY ON PERCEPTION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AMONG LIBRARIANS

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ABSTRACT

The emerging field of knowledge management has become the key concern for librarians and libraries produce huge volume of digitized data and knowledge management practices improve effectiveness both for institutions and libraries. This study aims to identify the awareness of knowledge management concepts and practices using questionnaires collected from individuals. The knowledge management perceptions among librarians are analysed using SWOT techniques to identify the strength, weakness, opportunities and threats. The outcome of analytical study it is found that the librarians are aware about knowledge management but there exist variation based on their qualifications and experiences.

KEYWORDS: SWOT, Knowledge Management, Librarian, Library

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge management (KM) is about building organisational intelligence by enabling people to improve the work in the way of capturing, sharing, and using knowledge. KM involves using the ideas and experience of people and process to improve the performance. KM is relatively a new discipline in library and information science discipline that focuses on effective research on development of knowledge, foundation of knowledge creation, exchange and sharing of knowledge between experts and users. Many institutions today recognize that sharing and managing of knowledge is important for attaining competitive advantage. KM defined as processes or practices of creating, acquiring, capturing, sharing and re-using organisational knowledge (know-how) to improve performance and achieve goals of an organisation (White, 2001).

Academic libraries represent indispensable link in the knowledge innovation and promote basis for collection, processing, storage and distribution of knowledge. KM in libraries can help to promote relationship in and between academic libraries, between library and user, to strengthen knowledge internetworking and for quickening knowledge flow. The academic libraries adopt new policies, strategies and implementation of KM for rendering qualitative services to its users.

Librarians can make a contribution to KM with the ability to identity, access, evaluate, organise and communicate information and knowledge constituting a core capability for the knowledge society. The part of the knowledge of a library lies with expertise and it varies from person to person. This paper is organised as follows: section 2 provides the methodology used for data collection. In section 3 and 4 the analytical techniques SWOT for analyzing KM s is discussed. Section 5 presents the perceptions of respondents input related to KM followed by conclusion in section 6.

METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of the study is to know the perception of knowledge management among the librarians with respect to assessing the personal opinion of KM in libraries.

Research methodology focussed mainly around issues like objectivity, accuracy, factual knowledge and scientific proof for validation of proposed study. The qualitative study focusses the awareness of KM among librarian and explores views, perceptions, interpretations and experiences of individuals. The population of this study is the librarians of engineering colleges affiliated to Anna University of technology, Coimbatore in the year of 2009.

The questionnaire comprises 25 questions divided into six major sections in the caption of personal information, institution details, available ICT infrastructure, KM basics, awareness and utilisation of knowledge management sources and degrees of understanding of knowledge management processes. The questionnaires are analysed using SWOT techniques.

SWOT

The SWOT analysis is an extremely useful analytical technique for understanding and decision making for all sorts of situations in organisations. SWOT is also referred as *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats* (Kasting, 2008; Ugah, 2007; Wiig, Hoog and Spek, 1996). SWOT analysis focus their actions in both the internal (Strengths and Weaknesses) aspect and as well as the external (Opportunities and Threats) aspect based on the thoughts, opinions and perceptions of participants.

SWOT ANALYSIS

The data analysis is carried out using SWOT analysis to find the perception of KM among librarians to analyze the strengths, reduce or eliminate weaknesses, minimize threats and take advantage of opportunities based on the respondents input is discussed in the sections below and the analytical outcome of the same is given in Figure 1.

Strength

Strength of KMs analysis includes qualities of library professionals, usage of ICT resources and knowledge collections. The respondents views related to strength of KM it is classified as given below.

Skilled and Dedicated Staff

The librarian and supporting library staff who are knowledgeable, service-oriented, flexible and co-operate with each other in fulfilling their responsibilities are considered as strengths who contribute to higher level of education and motivates through their positions.

Knowledge Sharing Tools to Maximize Use

The knowledge sharing tools maintained in library through ICT infrastructure services like Social networking websites, e-mail and group discussion rooms are considered as strength in KM for knowledge sharing.

Knowledge Collaboration

The technology that helps to collaborate with similar research users in the community, fostering collaboration and decreasing the likelihood of duplication of effort is considered as strength.

Knowledge Collections

The maximum number of library resource collections in print and electronic form is considered as strength of KM as it provides primary source for researchers.

Weakness

Weakness of KM s analysis is based on internal barriers in institutions. The weaknesses of KM based on respondents view are classified as follows.

Organizational Network

Library professionals should be responsible to develop a network between knowledge sources and users group and to create a strong relationship and contacts both within and outside of the organisation. It is found from the respondents view that when the library staff lacks building organisational network cannot contribute for organisation benefits.

Reward/Incentive for Achievement

The reward and incentives contributed by organisation plays an important role as knowledge workers are motivated by financial rewards to share their knowledge, to collaborate or to communicate

No Trust with Others knowledge

Trust is considered as key component for sharing ideas, experiences and establishing relationship with people. It becomes necessary for people to know each other as individuals, but not just as scientist community members or representatives of organisation according to views of respondents.

Lack of Technical and Communication skills

Poor communication skills both human and technical are the greatest leadership weakness. The changing role of academic librarians as knowledge managers emphasises the need to constantly update or acquire new skills and knowledge to remain relevant to the today's library environment.

Opportunity

Concerning with the statement of opportunity in KM the following points are classified based on respondents input.

Capture and Preservation of Knowledge for Future Demand

Knowledge Preservation is the process of creating and selective maintenance of information, documents and experience required by management as a long term asset to the organization.

Knowledge SHARING Helps to Know the Latest Developments

Each one of them can share their own circle, sharing their unique ideas and successful methodologies with others similarly engaged. Knowledge sharing team and experts has to provide with the latest news, technological innovations and all other developments in the world of education.

Resource Reuse

The aim of this library is to allow staff and students to reuse these resources across different tasks and domains.

The reuse of library resources should be made cost effective by providing maximum usage of resources.

Interact with Knowledge Experts Group

Expert Directory is becoming an important tool to find knowledge experts within the organisation or geographically scattered. Maintenance of expert Directory provides access to users that have similar and specific knowledge people.

Threats

Threats of KM comprise external technological barriers. The Threats of KM based on respondents view is classified as given below.

Move from Traditional to Digital/Virtual Library

Traditional libraries are permanent archives with valuable source of information which is expected to be replaced by digital/virtual library in the world. It is found that there has been a steady increase in new publications created specifically for the digital environment (Example: Online periodicals, Video course, e-books). Physical presentation of the library users gradually reduced due to the recent ICT developments.

Retire Legacy Print Collections

The importance of print collections in academic library has declined rapidly. The academic libraries are facing possibly for three strategic issues, adequate space, increasing of cost, and reading habit.

Copyright and Licensing Agreements

Copyright, licensing and digital rights management is some of the more complex issues that library face.

Rapidly Changing Users Perception

Libraries are the services based around personal interaction between users and the library staff. The rapidly changing user requirement is a challenging phase in library development.

ANALYTICAL OUTCOME

The analytical outcome with respect to strength of KM based on respondents view is given in Figure 1. The strength of KM, revealed that 83.5% respondents has given top priority for skilled and 59.6% respondent opted least for knowledge collaboration. In respondent views regarding weakness of KM by respondent highest priority (84.4%) is organisational network followed by least (61.5%) one is respondent gave importance for reward/incentive system.

The opportunity in KM is interacting with knowledge experts by 79.8% of respondents followed by 56% respondent has selected for knowledge reuse as important. The statement related to threats of KM based on respondents views are users perception (86.2%) is highest threat followed by 54.1% suggested that digital/virtual library as least threat for KM.

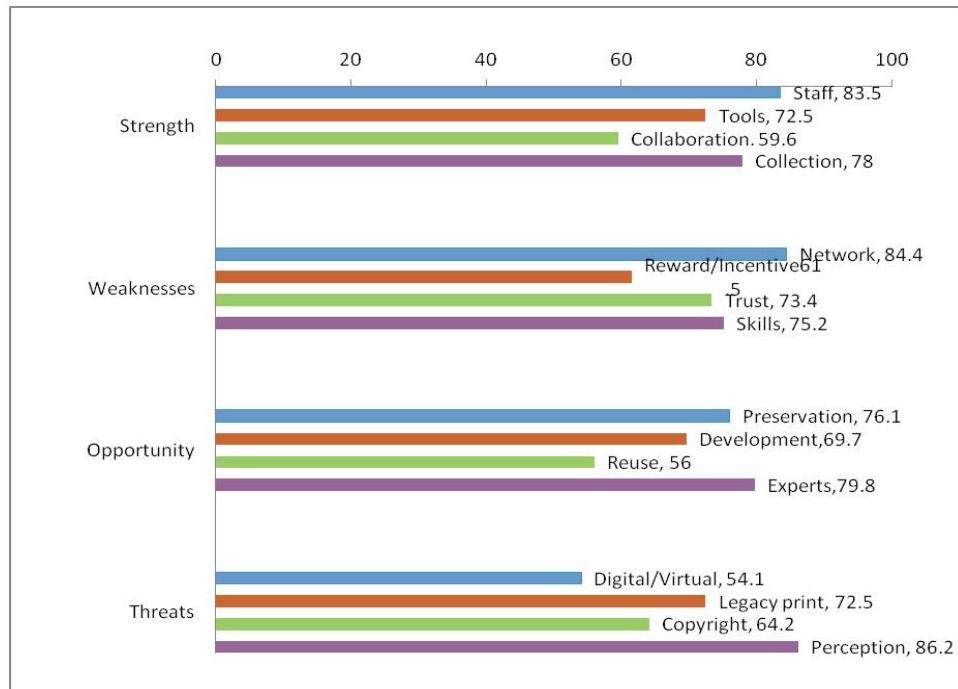


Figure 1: Awareness of Knowledge Managements by Respondents

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper the study for analyzing the awareness of KM among librarians using SWOT technique was carried out. It is found that users perceptions are varying based on the individuals education and experience. The study also discussed the KM based on the awareness of respondents and highlighted the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of KM environment in academic library.

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